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Linguistics as a profession: Diverging opinions in the nineteenth century

JAN NOORDEGRAAF

Das vergleichende Sprachstudium kann nur dann zu sicheren und bedeutenden Aufschlüssen über Sprache, Volkerentwicklung und Menschenbildung führen, wenn man es zu einem eignen, seinen Nutzen und Zweck in sich selbst tragenden Studium macht.

Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Über das vergleichende Sprachstudium* (1820)

The term *philology*, in British and in older American usage, is applied not only to the study of culture (especially through literary documents), but also to linguistics. It is important to distinguish between *philology* (German *Philologie*, French *philologie*) and *linguistics* (German *Sprachwissenschaft*, French *linguistique*), since the two studies have little in common.

Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (1933)

Introduction

The date is 1872 AD. We read verses 2-15 in the first part of the prologue to the recently published *Oera Linda Bók*:

Thissa boka mot i mid lif änd sele wârja. Se umbifattath thiu skêdnisse fon us ele folk ak fon usa ethlum. Urliden jer hâb ik tham ut er flod hred tolik mid thi änd thinra moder. Tha hja weron wet werden. Ther thruch gungon hja äfternei urdärva. Umbe hja naut to urlisa hâb ik ra up urlandisk pampier uurskreven. Sahwersa thu se erve, mot du se ak urskriva. Thin bärn als – til thiu hja nimmerthe wei naut ne kuma.¹ [116]

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¹ Sandbach, *The Oera Linda book*, p. 3: ‘You must preserve these books with body and soul. They contain the history of all our people, as well as of our forefathers. Last year, I saved them in the flood, as well as you and your mother; but they got wet, and therefore began to perish. In order not to lose them, I copied them on foreign

This intriguing passage stems from *Thet Oera Linda Bôk* ('The Oera Linda Book'), a well-known mystification that caused a great deal of controversy in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The book was said to be composed in Old Frisian and was supposed to date from the thirteenth century. It was Jan Beckering Vinckers (1821-1891), a teacher at the Kampen gymnasium and an enthusiastic comparative linguist, who exposed its language as pure 'nonsense' in his 1876 brochure entitled *De onechtheid van het Oera-Linda-Bôk, aangetoond uit de wartaal waarin het is geschreven*.²

Drawing upon historical-comparative language analysis (he compared the 'OLB-ese', i.e. the language in which the Oera Linda Bôk was written, to Gothic, Anglo-Saxon and Old-Frisian), Beckering Vinckers demonstrated that this text could not possibly be Old Frisian. In this way, he managed to determine the falseness of the *Oera Linda Bôk*. Even a critical and independent mind such as the celebrated Dutch writer Multatuli (1820-1887) had to concede, albeit unwillingly.³ The 'new, scientific, comparative language study', as Beckering Vinckers called his profession, proved capable of resolving the dispute regarding the authenticity of the book in a most convincing manner.⁴

It is not sheer coincidence that such a brochure appeared in 1876. In linguistic historiography, the year 1876 is generally considered as 'a turning point in the history of linguistics' and a true *annus mirabilis* ('year of wonders'). In that year, historical-comparative language study reached an unprecedented level, particularly in Germany.⁵ The euphoric sentiment that greets the reader in Vinckers's brochure is therefore not surprising. Moreover, 1876 is also the year in which a new Act on Higher Education became effective in the Netherlands. Following the passage of this legislation, Gothic, Sanskrit, the principles of Comparative Indo-European linguistics, and similar elements were added to the curriculum used for the study of Dutch.⁶ [117]

In 1885, Jan Beckering Vinckers, a *doctor honoris causa* of Utrecht University (1879), was appointed Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Groningen, allowing him to make linguistics his sole profession: *Sprachwissenschaft als Beruf*, to make a variation on the title of Max Weber's well-known 1917 essay. After a long teaching career, which included private study and numerous linguistic publications, some called him 'the father of comparative language study' in this country.⁷ The strength of such a reputation justifies my use of his brochure on the *Oera Linda Bôk* as a starting point for my exposition of certain aspects of the development of historical-comparative linguistics in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century. Vinckers's booklet was the elaborated version of a paper presented to the fourteenth Nederlandsch Taal- en Letterkundig Congres ('Dutch-Flemish Conference on Language and Literature'), which took place in Maastricht in 1875.

paper. In case you inherit them, you must copy them likewise, and your children must do so too, so that they may never be lost'. Cf. Ottema, *Thet Oera Linda Bok*, p. 3; Beckering Vinckers, *De onechtheid van het Oera-Linda-Bôk*, p. 33.

² 'The unauthenticity of the Ura-Linda-book, shown from the gibberish in which it is written'.

³ Multatuli (Eduard Douwes Dekker), himself a fervent practitioner of speculative etymology, grumbled about Beckering Vincker's outbursts against the 'onwetenschappelyke etymologen', the 'unscientific etymologists'. 'I truly regret that I do not believe in its authenticity myself. How I should like to fight for it, if only the situation were different, and then as *unscientifically* as possible!' ('t *Spyt* me dat ikzelf niet aan de echtheid geloof. Wat zou ik er graag voor stryden als dit anders was, en dan zoo *onwetenschappelyk* mogelyk!'. Cf. Noordegraaf, 'Multatuli en de taal van Ur', p. 53.

⁴ Jensma, *De gemaskerde god*. The discussion on the authorship has been going on for more than a century.

⁵ Koerner, '1876 as a turning point in the history of linguistics'.

⁶ Van Essen, *Kruisinga. A chapter in the history of linguistics in the Netherlands*, pp. 38-39.

⁷ Zuidema, 'Vinckers', p. 1310: 'vader der vergelijkende taalstudie'.

These conferences were held biennially from 1849 until 1912, alternating between Flanders and the Netherlands. They provided an important discussion platform with regard to the nineteenth-century study of Dutch in the broad sense.

When reading Vinckers's 1876 brochure, it is striking to observe the level of criticism that was launched against Dutch classical scholarship. It seemed as if these classical philologists still did not wish to become acquainted with the achievements of comparative language study. For example, the internationally reputed Leiden *graecus* Carel Gabriel Cobet (1813-1889) once sardonically remarked: 'The new art of etymology is currently in vogue, although – in quite plain terms – present-day knowledge does not generate anything more plausible than the lack of knowledge of the old days'.⁸ As Vinckers observed with a sigh, this statement was advanced by [118] a famous professor associated with the same university as Professor Henri Kern (1833-1917), whom Vinckers regarded as 'one of the most versatile and profound language specialists in the Netherlands'.⁹ In Vinckers's opinion, the Dutch classical philologists were not yet using the new, comparative study of language to a satisfactory extent.

As it appears, a divergence of opinions had occurred during the course of the century in the field of language study.¹⁰ I use this opposition between (historical-comparative) linguistics and (classical) philology in this report to highlight several aspects of the 'autonomization' of linguistic science in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century.

It is interesting to note that in Beckering Vinckers's 1876 brochure, as well as in his adaptation of the third edition (1870) of the well-known book by the American scholar William Dwight Whitney (1817-1894), *Language and the study of language* (1867), Vinckers points to the linguistic works of the Dutch scholar Lambert ten Kate (1674-1731). According to Vinckers, the latter's name deserved as much respect as those names of the 'founding fathers' of historical-comparative linguistics, including Grimm and Bopp.¹¹ Because of Jacob Grimm (1819) and Franz Bopp (1816), along with 'a legion of congenial hardworking students of language', language study has been elevated to an inductive science, and the original unity of the Indo-Germanic languages has been made 'by means of

⁸ 'Nunc nova Etymologiarum ars calet, sed, ne dicam dolo, ἡ νῦν τέχνη της πρότερον ἀτεχνίας οὐ πάνυ τι πιθανώτερα ἵκται' ('Homerica' in *Mnemosyne* n.s. 2 (1874), 176), or in Dutch: 'Thans is er de nieuwe afleidkunde in zwang, maar ronduit gezegd, de tegenwoordige kunde baart volstrekt niets geloofwaardigers dan de vroegere onkunde' (Beckering Vinckers, *Taal en taalstudie*, vol. 1, p. iv; cf. also Beckering Vinckers, *De onechtheid*, pp. 16-17). As late as 1925, the author Carry van Bruggen (1881-1932) referred to this depreciating attitude of 'the great Cobet' in a discussion of language criticism contained in her sociolinguistic treatise *Hedendaagsch fetischisme*. ('Contemporary fetichism'). See Van Bruggen, *Hedendaagsch fetischisme*, p. 116. Cf. also Slings, *Jan Woltjer tegen de school van Cobet*, p. 8. In his 1846 inaugural lecture in Leiden, Cobet refused any cooperation with historical-comparative linguistics. In his opinion, comparativists held the same low status as archaeologists. For Cobet's stance with regard to the *comparativi*, see also Naber, 'Cobet', p. 238. Note that in the early years of his career the well-known Sanskrit scholar Franz Bopp (1791-1867) was the target of many 'Kathederwitzes' on the part of 'les philologues classiques de la première moitié du XIXe siècle' (cf. Rocher, 'Les philologues classiques et les débuts de la grammaire comparée', p. 252. Cf. Beckering Vinckers, *De onechtheid van het Oera-Linda-Bôk*, pp. 16-17).

⁹ Beckering Vinckers, *Taal en taalstudie*, vol. 1, p. xii: 'een der schranderste, veelzijdigste en grondigste taalkenners in Nederland'.

¹⁰ Rocher, 'Les philologues classiques et les débuts de la grammaire comparée', 'Klassieke filologie contra vergelijkende taalwetenschap'.

¹¹ Beckering Vinckers, *Taal en taalstudie*, vol. 1, p. 38.

irrefutable proofs into an uncontested fact [...]'. However, these scholars have accomplished this in the wake of a Dutch eighteenth-century linguist, viz. 'our ten Kate'.¹² [119]

According to Beckering Vinckers, the foundations of historical-comparative linguistics had actually been laid as early as the eighteenth century. I begin by showing how he could arrive at this conclusion, followed by a discussion of the theoretical and methodological consequences of the view that the science of language was something quite different from the ancient philology and the traditional *ars grammatica* with regard to the mother tongue. In other words, I demonstrate how new disciplinary boundaries were explicitly drawn in the nineteenth century, boundaries that had not yet been marked with any sharpness in the century before.

Eighteenth-century language study in the Netherlands: 'Newtonian linguistics'¹³

In the first quarter of the eighteenth century, Lambert ten Kate, of Amsterdam, and his mentor and fellow Amsterdam citizen Adriaen Verwer (ca. 1655-1717) deliberately chose to follow the historical-linguistic path in order to demonstrate the order and regularity in language. In this choice, they clearly appear to be inspired by religious motives.¹⁴ In the wake of Isaac Newton (1643-1727), whom both of them greatly admired, they used an empirical-inductive method in their research.

The polymath Lambert ten Kate 'learn'd the English on purpose to read Sir Isaac Newton's Works, of which he was a great Admirer', said his friend and very first biographer, Jacob Christoph Le Blon (1667-1741) in 1732. Among his other works, Ten Kate composed a treatise entitled 'Proef-ondervindend over the scheyding der coleuren' ('Experiment on the division of the colours' 1716), emulating an experiment described in Newton's '*Gezigt-kunde*'.¹⁵

The year 1723 saw the publication of Ten Kate's bulky, two-volume 'Introduction to the Exalted Part of the Dutch Language', the celebrated *Aenleiding* [120] *tot de kennis van het verhevene deel*

¹² Cf. Beckering Vinckers, *De onechtheid van het Oera-Linda-Bôk*, p. 11: 'Maar nu – op voorgang van Leibnitz en onzen Ten Kate – Grimm en Bopp in het tweede tiental van deze eeuw, en na hen een heerleger van gelijkgezinde noeste taalbeoefenaars, de taalstudie tot een inductieve wetenschap hebben verheven, nu zij de Duitsche taaltakken, waaronder ook het O.friesch behoort, in hunne historische ontwikkeling hebben bestudeerd en door hun grondig onderzoek de oorspronkelijke eenheid der Indogermaansche talen door onomstootelijke bewijzen tot een onweerlegbaar feit hebben gemaakt [...]'. Idem, *Taal en taalstudie*, vol. 1, p. 39: 'Ik houd mij volkomen overtuigd, dat Grimm aan de studie van Ten Kate's werk niet weinig te danken heeft gehad [...] Wat Bacon was voor het wetenschappelijk natuuronderzoek in 't algemeen, dat was Ten Kate voor de wetenschappelijke taalstudie' ('I for one am fully convinced that Grimm learned a great deal from his study of ten Kate's work. [...] What Bacon has been for scientific research in general, ten Kate was for the scientific study of language'). Moreover, in numerous places Beckering Vinckers detected 'een allerverrassendste overeenkomst' ('a most surprising similarity') between the ideas of ten Kate and those of the distinguished linguist Whitney, one and a half centuries later – a quite interesting theme that still has to be explored. .

¹³ For this term, see Georges Gusdorf, *Les sciences humaines et la conscience occidentale*. VI. *L'avènement des sciences humaines au siècle des lumières* (Paris 1973), p. 295. Gusdorf mentions the 'linguistique newtonienne' as the successor to the 'linguistique cartésienne'. With regard to the latter term, see Noam Chomsky, *Cartesian linguistics. A chapter in the history of rationalist thought* (1966), a book which evoked many a critical reaction. Dijksterhuis (174-176) makes some pertinent remarks on the historiographical value of the term 'Newtonianism'.

¹⁴ Noordegraaf, 'Amsterdamse kringen. Taalkunde en theologie rond 1700', 'Lambert ten Kate and the logos'.

¹⁵ Newton, *Opticks* (1704) .

der Nederduitsche sprake, waer in hare zekerste grondslag, edelste kragt, nuttelijkste onderscheiding, en geregeldste afleiding overwogen en naegespoort, en tegen het allervoornaemste der [...] taelverwanten, als 't oude Moeso-Gotthisch, Frank-Duitsch, en Angel-Saxisch [...] vergeleken word ('Introduction to knowledge of the sublime part of the Dutch language, in which its firmest foundation, noblest force, most useful order and most regular derivation is considered and explored, and is compared with the most relevant portion of the cognate languages such as the ancient Moeso-Gothic, Frankish-German, and Anglo-Saxon'). In 1729, Ten Kate wrote the following to a correspondent in Danzig: 'I assume that almost all of it is brand new and has not been treated thus far. As it appeared to me, it is the most important part of the study of our own language and that of all our linguistic relatives, such as the High Germans and the English, Swedish and Danish'.¹⁶ He was right: the *Aenleiding* proved a most important linguistic work, not only with regard to its contents but to its methodology as well.

Ten Kate was inspired to begin his historical-comparative linguistic research by the *mercator sapiens* ('wise merchant') from Amsterdam, Adriaen Verwer, whom I just mentioned. In addition to being a jurist and a linguist, Verwer was an early reader and great admirer of Newton's *Principia Mathematica* (1687). He played a crucial role in a network of people who can be regarded as exponents of the scholarly culture in the second half of the seventeenth century. This network comprised researchers who were interested in various forms of *scientia*, from physics and mathematics to philosophy and language.¹⁷ One of these scholars was Lambert ten Kate.

Within this Amsterdam circle opinions varied as far as language study was concerned. 'I am not a member of the community of authors of note', Verwer noted in 1708.¹⁸ In other words, he stated that he did not count himself as a member of the literary network to which his acquaintance David van Hoogstraten (1658-1724), 'conrector' at the Latin school in Amsterdam, did belong. Undoubtedly, it can be argued that language was a common and binding factor in this literature-oriented circle, particularly with regard to the love of and the [121] study of literary texts, both classical and contemporary, and attention to the norms and use of language. Verwer, however, was of the opinion that language research had to be research of the overall linguistic system first of all; according to him, the study of language had to be empirically founded. Linguistic researchers were like cartographers: they had to deduce the regularities from actually observed language use in the right sources exclusively. These sources were to be found in the past.¹⁹ All in all, one could argue that Verwer makes a *de facto* distinction between philology and linguistics.

To my mind, Verwer's stance *anno domini* 1708 reveals the essential tension between the empirical-historical study of language directed towards the discovery of the underlying language system, and an approach that was primarily directed towards the culture of language.²⁰ In this *caesura* between historico-empirical language study and a normative approach including language culture, explicit disciplinary consequences (linguistics versus philology) were seen only around the middle of

¹⁶ Ten Kate to Johann Philipp Breyne, 1729. Printed in Noordegraaf, 'Ten Kate schrijft naar Dantsig', p. 100: 'Ik weet niet beter of 't is byna alles nieuw en onverhandelt, en, zo 't mij toegeleek, van 't gewigtigste in onze Taelkunde en in die van alle onze Taelverwanten, zo Hoogduitschers als Engelschen, Zweden en Deenen'.

¹⁷ Van de Bilt, *Landkaartschrijvers en landverdelers*, pp. 30-34; Jorink & Maas, *Newton and the Netherlands*, pp. 22-25.

¹⁸ Van de Bilt, *Landkaartschrijvers en landverdelers*, p. 36: 'Ik ben geen lidt der Schryveren van name'.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 304.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 83.

the next century, in the publications of the Dutch scholar Matthias de Vries (1820-1892) and other authors. I shall return to this issue.

In 1812, the jurist H.W. Tydeman (1778-1863) wrote to Jacob Grimm (1785-1863) that the studies of the former merchant and independent researcher Lambert ten Kate were of the same calibre as the works of such internationally reputed professors as the orientalist Albert Schultens (1686-1750) and the classical scholar Tiberius Hemsterhuis (1685-1766). Schultens and other orientalists proceeded along the lines of language comparison, while Hemsterhuis and his school of classical philologists also developed a linguistic research method of their own in their practice as professional editors of texts and exegetes of New Testament texts. Empiricism, induction, the search for fixed rules and systematics were aspects of eighteenth-century language study that clearly found their reflection in the circles around the new *Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde* ('Society of Dutch Language and Literature'), which was founded in Leiden in 1766. Linguistic research was duly adopted within this society, and these empirical views pervaded elsewhere as well, for example in the *Nederduitsche Spraakkunst* (1805) by Pieter Weiland (1754-1842), a 'Dutch grammar' which was sanctioned by the Dutch government and prescribed to all government officials and teachers²¹, and in the works of Everwinus Wassenbergh (1742-1826), one of the first professors of Dutch language and literature. The publications [122] of the influential man of letters Adriaan Kluit (1735-1807), also show the influence of Verwer and Ten Kate.²²

In the late eighteenth century, August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845) had been working as a tutor in Amsterdam for some years and appears to have acquainted himself with Dutch studies on language. Thus, he recommended the works of the so-called *Schola Hemsterhusiana* to his brother Friedrich (1772-1829).²³ In 1815, Schlegel also referred to the works of Lambert ten Kate in his sharp critique of the Grimm brothers and their speculative way of etymologizing, when he remarked:

For the history of our grammar so far much more has been achieved by foreign scholars than by German. As an example we just name [...] a Dutch work: *Gemeenschap tussen de Gottische Spraeke en de Nederduytsche* ['The relationship between the Gothic and Dutch languages', 1710] by Lambert ten Kate.²⁴

In other words, Schlegel's recommendation to Grimm was to follow Ten Kate's method.²⁵ It was indeed not without effect: 'It appears that the elder Schlegel's constructive criticism motivated Jacob Grimm to seriously follow this advice [...]'.²⁶ Thanks to his Dutch correspondent Meinard Tydeman (1741-1825), Jacob Grimm eventually managed to acquire a copy of Ten Kate's main work, *Aenleiding tot de kennisse van het verhevene deel der Nederduitsche sprake* (1723), in 1818. Hence, Beckering Vinckers wrote: 'I am fully convinced that Grimm owed a considerable debt to the study of

²¹ Bakker & Dibbets, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse taalkunde*, p. 121.

²² Van de Bilt, *Landkaartschrijvers en landverdelers*, passim.

²³ Scholte, 'August Wilhelm Schlegel in Amsterdam', p. 137.

²⁴ 'Für die Geschichte unserer Grammatik ist bisher durch Ausländern mehr geleistet worden als durch deutsche Gelehrte. Wir nennen hier vorzüglich [...] eine holländische Schrift: *Gemeenschap tussen de Gottische Spraeke en de Nederduytsche* [1710] von Lambert ten Kate' (citation taken from Jongeneelen, 'Lambert ten Kate', p. 212). This booklet, which Ten Kate composed at the prompting of his compatriot Adriaen Verwer, can be regarded as a preliminary study to the voluminous *Aenleiding* of 1723.

²⁵ Jongeneelen, 'Lambert ten Kate and the Origin of 19th-Century Historical Linguistics', p. 212.

²⁶ Koerner, *Practicing linguistic historiography*, p. 306.

Ten Kate's work',²⁷ although Jacob Grimm was never very generous with references to the Dutch scholar's *magnum opus*.²⁸ [123]

The existence of a methodological line that runs from the eighteenth century into the nineteenth century can also be concluded from the linguistic works of the preacher and language researcher Joast Hiddes Halbertsma (1789-1869). This Frisian scholar started as a disciple of Tiberius Hemsterhuis and his most important student, Lodewijk Caspar Valckenaer (1715-1785), and he has always remained a true adherent of these scholars. Around 1830, Halbertsma discovered Grimm's historical school and began to follow this track, as is evident in his subsequent writings. In a letter dated 12 June 1843 to Valckenaer's grandson, Lodewijk Caspar Luzac (1786-1861), Halbertsma specified the source of his linguistic knowledge and 'historical view' as follows: 'I must say that it was solely Ludovicus Casparus [Valckenaer]. [...] everything I have achieved and still hope to achieve [is] nothing more than the application of his principles to the study of Germanic languages'.²⁹ It is therefore not surprising that Feitsma ventured to conclude that 'the transition between the Hemsterhusians and nineteenth-century historical linguistics seems to be very natural, or rather: historical linguistics had more or less taken its starting point in the *Schola Hemsterhusiana*'.³⁰ In other words, the *Schola Hemsterhusiana* demonstrates the continuity that existed between the linguistic thought of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³¹ I should like to emphasize that the founding fathers of historical-comparative grammar (e.g. Schlegel, Rask, Bopp, Grimm, and Humboldt) were all familiar with the works of the *Schola Hemsterhusiana*. These works were published (or republished) around the turn of the nineteenth century, during the formative years of these German and Danish linguists.

The case of Halbertsma is a clear link between the eighteenth and nineteenth-century approaches, as Feitsma concludes, with reference to convincing continuities and conformities and observing no evident *caesura*.³² As late as 1845, when the *Schola Hemsterhusiana* had already been out of fashion for a long time, Halbertsma (a scholar with an elaborate European network) edited an interesting linguistic lecture of Hemsterhuis. He sent a complimentary copy to his long-time correspondent Jacob Grimm. The latter was apparently unimpressed, however, as evidenced by his sharp criticism of the etymological work of the *Schola Hemsterhusiana*, which he published shortly thereafter. Several of Grimm's compatriots also [124] demonstrated that they were not charmed by the achievements of their Dutch colleagues of old.³³

²⁷ Beckering Vinckers, *Taal en taalstudie*, vol. 1, p. 39: 'Ik houd mij volkomen overtuigd, dat Grimm aan de studie van ten Kate's werk niet weinig heeft te danken gehad'.

²⁸ Verburg, *Language and its functions*, p. 456 n. 23 for Grimm's acknowledgment in his *Deutsche Grammatik* that Ten Kate had already noticed the importance of *Ablaut*. See also Bod, *A New History of the Humanities*, p. 282.

²⁹ 'Ik mag zeggen: alleen van Ludovicus Casparus [Valckenaer]. [...] en ik mag zeggen, dat alles wat ik gepraesteerd heb en nog hoop te praesteren, niet anders dan de toepassing zijner beginselen op de Germaansche taalstudie was'. (Kalma, 'Briefwisseling Halbertsma-Luzac', pp. 139-140).

³⁰ Feitsma, *Tussen Hemsterhuis en Grimm*, p. 94.

³¹ Various arguments for this continuity are adduced by Feitsma, *Tussen Hemsterhuis en Grimm*, p. 85 sqq.

³² Feitsma, 'Schola Hemsterhusiana', passim; De Jong, *Knooppunt Halbertsma*, p. 35.

³³ For example, having given a concise summary of the main ideas of the Dutch school of classical grammarians in his influential *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft und orientalischen Philologie in Deutschland*, Theodor Benfey (1809-1881) curtly concluded: '[...] es wäre Papierverderb, wenn wir diesen Unsinn weiter verfolgen wollten'. Cf. Benfey, *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft und orientalischen Philologie in Deutschland*, p. 258.

In sum, it can be argued that what has been called Dutch eighteenth-century ‘Enlightenment Linguistics’, is characterized by an empirical and inductive method of working and by a search – through the history of language – for regularity (analogy) and fixed rules in language.³⁴ In addition and, in some cases, contradiction to the prevailing practical-normative grammar, this positioning led to the foundation of a separate linguistic trend in the course of the nineteenth century. This discipline came to exist alongside such trusted fields of study as classical and oriental philology.

From ‘ars’ to ‘scientia’. A paradigm ‘under construction’

The work of the Reverend Halbertsma is a fine example of how historical-comparative linguistics was practised in the Netherlands in the early nineteenth century. In many cases, the historical and comparative study of language had a rather hybrid character. For example, results from the works of Jacob Grimm filtered through in the study of Germanic languages (Frisian, Dutch). It is a meandering stream of publications, with old and new intertwined, produced by a highly diverse assembly of theologians, dabbling jurists and the like. These works included the Dutch adaptation of the *Mithridates oder allgemeine Sprachkunde mit dem Vater Unser als Sprachprobe in beynahe fünfhundert Sprachen und Mundarten* (‘Mithridates or general knowledge of languages including the Lord’s Prayer as a linguistic sample text in almost five hundred languages and dialects’, 1806-1817, four volumes), the last work of ‘Germany’s great language master’, Johann Christoph Adelung (1732-1806), a scholar who was frequently followed in the Netherlands. This adaptation, entitled *Geschieden letterkundige nasporingen omtrent de afkomst en verspreiding der talen van de onderscheidene [125] volkeren* (‘Historical and linguistic investigations into the origin and the distribution of the languages of the various nations’, 1826-1827), appeared in two volumes. It was composed by Jacob Carel Willem le Jeune (1775-1864), a polyhistor from The Hague.

One of the Dutch scholars who borrowed abundantly from the *Mithridates* was Barthold Henrik Lulofs (1787-1849), a jurist who was appointed professor of Dutch language and eloquence at the University of Groningen in 1815. In his 1819 *Schets van een overzicht der Duitsche taal, of der Germaansche taaltakken, in derzelver oorsprong en tegenwoordige verdeling in het Hoogduitsch, Nederlandsch, Deensch, Zweedsch, Engelsch, en andere soortgelijke verwantschappe talen en tongvallen* (‘Sketch of an overview of the German language, or of the Germanic language branches in their origin and present-day division into High German, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, English and other similar cognate languages and dialects’), a work once characterized by Johan Huizinga³⁵ as a bric-a-brac of assorted linguistic trinkets, Lulofs acknowledged that he had borrowed many data from ‘the well-known *Mithridates* by Adelung’.³⁶ It later became obvious, however, that he was an ardent admirer of Jacob Grimm, ‘that miracle of linguistics in Germany’.³⁷ It was therefore in Groningen

As late as 1884, August Friedrich Pott (1802-1887) remarked that the achievements of the ‘holländischen Schule [...] uns heute nur ein mitleidsvolles Lächeln entlocken’. Cf. Pott, *Einleitung in die Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft*, p. 248.

³⁴ Noordegraaf, ‘From “Radical Enlightenment” to Comparative Historical Linguistics’, pp. 155-168.

³⁵ Huizinga, ‘Geschiedenis der universiteit gedurende de derde eeuw van haar bestaan 1814-1914’, p. 99.

³⁶ Lulofs, *Schets van een overzicht der Duitsche taal of Germaanse taaltakken*, p. vi: ‘den bekenden Mithridates van Adelung’.

³⁷ Lulofs, *Gronden der Nederlandsche woordafleidkunde*, p. v: ‘dat wonder van taalkunde in Duitschland’.. What’s more, Lulofs praised Grimm in the following couplet: ‘Vaak heeft men ’t kroost onzer eeuw pygmeen in

rather than in Leiden or in Utrecht that admiration for this German scholar was expressed for the first time and information concerning historical-comparative linguistics was advanced. Lulofs nevertheless remained merely an ‘erudite dilettante’ who lacked a proper methodical approach, according to the words of the historian Johan Huizinga.³⁸ A genuine ‘paradigm shift’ in Dutch linguistics [126] was yet to happen. It was not until later that the accumulated insights could be brought together in a balanced *system*. Needless to say, the research at that time was fully occupied with diverse etymologies and with the publication of ancient texts, dialect glossaries and interpretations of places from ancient authors.

At the university in Leiden the orientalist Hendrik Arent Hamaker (1789-1835) had started to study Sanskrit, as becomes clear from his 1835 book that included his lectures on Indo-Germanic linguistics: *Over het nut en de belangrijkheid der grammaticale vergelijking van het Grieksch, het Latijn en de germaansche tongvallen met het Sanskrit* (‘On the usefulness and the importance of grammatical comparison of Greek, Latin and the Germanic tongues with Sanskrit’).³⁹ The ‘discovery’ of Sanskrit by Sir William Jones (1746-1794) in 1786, which was advanced in a rather biased eighteenth-century oration on the beauty of the various languages⁴⁰, had provided such European scholars as Franz Bopp (1791-1867) with an important instrument for research on the relationship of Indo-European languages. In this way, the comparative study of the grammar of Indo-European languages thus came into existence, a discipline that later, ‘having stood the test, served as an example to any methodical language comparison in other fields of language study’.⁴¹ Thus, it was just a matter of extrapolation. In the Dutch context, one can observe that the study of Dutch was the first field of language study to accept the ‘right’ method of language study, or in other words, the study of the mother tongue was to function as the ‘natural gateway’ into ‘linguistic science’, as can be shown on the basis of the following case.⁴²

geleerdheid gescholden: / Grimm, wie uw werken aanschouwt, Reus, hij bewondert en zwijgt’ (‘Though one often scolds the offspring of our century’s pygmies in knowledge / Those who behold your works, Grimm – Giant – keep silent and admire’).

³⁸ Huizinga, ‘Geschiedenis der universiteit gedurende de derde eeuw van haar bestaan 1814-1914’, p. 98. It is important not to underestimate the historical-grammatical learning of Lulofs. In late December 1830, H.W. Tydeman wrote to Grimm: ‘De beste taalkundigen, die wij nu nog hebben zullen zijn Halbertsma, Predikant te Deventer en Lulofs, Professor te Groningen’ (‘Among the best linguists whom we still have here, one finds Halbertsma, a minister at Deventer and Lulofs, Professor at Groningen’). In 1878, Huizinga’s teacher at the gymnasium in Groningen, Jan te Winkel (1847-1927), remarked that Barthold Lulofs ‘was de beste der Neerlandici’ (‘the most excellent among the students of Dutch’) in the first half of the nineteenth century. Lulofs was almost the only scholar who had occupied himself with ‘de uitkomsten der Hoogduitsche taalstudie, die hier te lande vóór het midden dezer eeuw nog te weinig bekend waren’ (‘the results of High-German language study, which were not very well known in our country until the middle of the century’). Cf. *Noord en Zuid* 1, 271.

³⁹ In 1836, the well-known German historical linguist August Pott (1802-1887) published a stinging review of Hamaker’s book, a work ‘aus dem, durch seine grossen Philologen einst so berühmten Holland’. Hamaker was slated by Pott, among other things because he seemed to have followed the Hemsterhusian scholar J.D. of Lennep (1724-1771) in a certain matter. Cf. Pott, [review of] *Akademische Voorlezingen over het nut en de belangrijkheid der grammatische vergelijking van het Grieks, het Latijn en de Germaansche tongvallen met het Sanskrit*, col. 15.

⁴⁰ Swiggers, *Histoire de la pensée linguistique*, p. 225.

⁴¹ Kern, ‘Philologie en taalvergelijking’, p. 51: ‘proefhoudend gebleken, als voorbeeld diende voor alle methodische taalvergelijking op ander taalgebied’.

⁴² Cf. Andresen, *Linguistics in America*, p. 128.

In 1849, the classical scholar Matthias de Vries (1820-1892) was appointed professor of Dutch language and eloquence at the University of Groningen, as the successor of Barthold Lulofs. From 1853 onwards, he worked as a professor in Leiden. Within the framework of the then prevailing Academic Statute, his subject area included no more than an obligatory course on eloquence and normative grammar intended for students of law and [127] theology.⁴³ The course notes that De Vries made for his first-year students, both in Groningen and in Leiden, reveal a division between a 'linguistic' and a 'philological' part. The aspects addressed by the linguistic part of the notes include the origin, affinity and history of our language (based in part on a work by the young German scholar August Schleicher from 1850). The philological part concerns practical language study (e.g. grammatical rules, proper choice of words, purity of language); in other words, it addresses language culture.⁴⁴

De Vries realized the importance of the knowledge of Sanskrit, Gothic, and Anglo-Saxon to what he saw as a scientifically solid study of the mother tongue. Immediately following his appointment at Groningen in 1849, De Vries started 'a *privatissimum* on Sanskrit'. In Leiden as well, as he wrote in 1854, 'I am teaching comparative language explanation of Indo-Germanic to a few young people'.⁴⁵ It is thus obvious that De Vries restructured his teaching programme from the inside, with the goal of elevating the discipline from an art (i.e. an *ars bene loquendi atque scribendi*) to a true science. I shall provide a brief commentary on his pursuit.

Light from the East: Matthias de Vries and German linguistics

The following phase in the development of historical-comparative linguistics emerged in the 1850s and 1860s. This development is connected with 'ein verschärftes Bewusstsein über die Wesensverschiedenheit von Philologie und Sprachwissenschaft (Linguistik)', 'a sharpened awareness of the difference between the essence of philology and that of linguistics', [128] and it is characterized by a diversion of opinions.⁴⁶ In his efforts to ground the distinction between linguistics and philology, De Vries aimed to stress the distinctive theoretical features of his own discipline, Dutch linguistics. He did this primarily in the wake of August Schleicher (1821-1868), who most consciously coined the term 'Glottik' in order to draw distinctions amongst the various approaches to

⁴³ Leemans & Johannes, *Worm en donder*, pp. 41-42. In 1797, professors had been appointed at the universities of Franeker (Everwinus Wassenbergh) and Leiden (Matthijs Siegenbeek) to teach courses on Dutch language and eloquence. Willemyns, *Dutch. Biography of a language*, pp. 126-142: Following the 'French period' (1806-1813) Dutch chairs were also established in Utrecht, Amsterdam and Groningen. I will leave the situation in the southern part of the Dutch-Belgian 'Verenigd Koninkrijk' (United Kingdom) out of consideration here; it is adequately discussed in Janssens & Steyaert, *Het onderwijs van het Nederlands in de Waalse provincies en Luxemburg* (2008).

⁴⁴ The negative judgments that De Vries made regarding the French language in the second part of his lecture notes are striking. This provides evidence of a motive of nationalism, which was an important theme in the nineteenth century, but one that I must leave out of consideration now.

⁴⁵ De Vries, *Brieven*, p. 65: 'geef ik voor een paar jongelui vergelijkende taalverklaring van het Indo-Germaansch'.

⁴⁶ Wolf & Kalkhoff, 'Sprachbegriff und Theorie des neusprachlichen Unterrichts im 19. Jahrhundert', p. 84.

language. In the words of Koerner, Schleicher ‘was concerned with establishing linguistics as an *autonomous discipline*, and not simply an appendix to classical philology, literature’.⁴⁷

In 1850, De Vries was apparently well aware of the fact that he had been called to Groningen as a ‘teacher of Dutch rhetoric’. His inaugural lecture refers to the distinction between the ‘linguist’ and the ‘master of the language’.⁴⁸ Both must be thoroughly acquainted with the language, and this implies a full knowledge of words and word forms, of meanings and of the laws that determine the character of the language, among other aspects.⁴⁹

Whereas a boundary marker has been reached here that science cannot cross, the command of the language should meet even higher demands. Even the most complete knowledge and the most concrete representation of the language, both in its deepest substance and in its thousand-fold phenomena, are not sufficient to rule it in truth, if the capacity is lacking to make full use of that knowledge and representation when applying them.⁵⁰

De Vries concludes: ‘You have seen... that we have passed here from the field of science to that of art’. In the latter field, it is even possible – and perhaps necessary – to be normative. It is the duty to hand down the language in a pure form to subsequent generations.⁵¹ To De Vries, eloquence is the ‘art’ [129] of expressing thoughts and sensations in a particular manner. Distinctions exist between ‘theoretical science’ and ‘practical training’ and between linguistics and eloquence.⁵² Incidentally, De Vries does not fail to refer to ‘that ancient *Pallasstad*’ (city of Pallas, sc. Leiden), where the spirit of a ‘Boerhaave and Hemsterhuis’ was still alive.⁵³ In Groningen, De Vries wished to work according to the examples he had acquired in Leiden. ‘In doing so, I shall attempt not to be a disgrace to the school that has educated me’.⁵⁴

At the end of his inaugural address, De Vries inserts a brief consideration to that which he considers most interesting: historical linguistics. ‘Finally, let us consider the science that should be the base of the practical training. It is of great importance to develop a clear idea of its character and purpose’.⁵⁵ Three years later in Leiden, he would elaborate that character and that purpose.⁵⁶ In Groningen, he limited himself to a concise exposition of his ideal: the historical study of the living

⁴⁷ Koerner, ‘Linguistics vs philology’, p. 170.

⁴⁸ De Vries, *De heerschappij over de taal, het beginsel der welsprekendheid*, p. 13: the ‘taalkenner’ vs the ‘meester der taal’.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, p. 12.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, pp. 13-14: ‘Maar terwijl hier het grenspunt bereikt is, dat de wetenschap niet kan overschrijden, heeft de heerschappij over de taal nog aan hoogere eischen te voldoen. Want zelfs de volledigste kennis en de meest aanschouwelijke voorstelling der taal, in haar innigste wezen zoowel als in hare duizendvoudige verschijnselen, zijn niet voldoende om haar in waarheid te beheerschen, wanneer het vermogen ontbreekt om van die kennis en die voorstelling in de toepassing volkomen gebruik te maken’.

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 15.

⁵² Ibidem, p. 25.

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 36.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, p. 37: ‘Zoo doende zal ik trachten der school, waarin ik gevormd ben, niet tot oneer te verstreken’.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, p. 26: ‘Slaan we ten slotte nog een blik op de wetenschap, die bij de praktische oefening ten grondslag moet liggen. Het is van groot belang, zich een helder denkbeeld te vormen van haren aard en hare strekking’.

⁵⁶ De Vries, *De Nederlandsche taalkunde in haren aard en hare strekking*.

language. In his 1853 inaugural lecture in Leiden, however, entitled *De Nederlandsche taalkunde in haren aard en hare strekking* ('Dutch linguistics in its character and its purpose'; he had studied the work of August Schleicher in the meantime), De Vries contrasted his own position forcefully with normative grammar and eloquence.

Does it suffice for one to limit oneself to the demands of civil society, to learn how to speak and write the language purely and elegantly and to learn to understand accurately whatever is written in the language? In short, [does it suffice] for its practice to be identical to that of the modern foreign languages, to which we rarely devote a more thorough study than is required for pleasant contacts and for not being deprived of the artistic enjoyment offered to us when abroad?⁵⁷ [130]

The answer is clear:

Nay, definitely, such a superficial knowledge, so completely limited to the external, cannot comprise the tribute that we owe the mother tongue. Linguistics must meet higher demands.⁵⁸

A comparison of the two inaugural lectures reveals the shift that had been made. In the Leiden lecture, eloquence as professed by De Vries's predecessors is for the main part disapproved. Despite the fact that he addresses his predecessor Matthijs Siegenbeek (1774-1854) in the most affable words at the end of his lecture, he does away with the manner in which Siegenbeek and his colleagues have practised the study of Dutch language and literature: eloquence, the study of the command of language, is not a true science. In this address, De Vries explicitly advances his linguistic-scientific ideals: linguistics is an empirical science, with a strictly inductive approach, fixed laws and without any *a priori* philosophizing. He later explains that philology also lacks a scientific character.

In 1882, in his introduction to the multi-volume *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* ('Dictionary of the Dutch Language', 1864-1998), De Vries illustrates the various approaches again. To the 'scientific language researcher', the

most outworn and mutilated word form is no less valuable than the most beautiful and most exquisite expression, just as for the botanist the most trivial weed is as important as the most splendid flower. He does not judge the quality of the words and the forms he observes; he merely describes them, determines their typical features, explains their origin and points out the laws that rule their life. [...] The language student who chooses the written language as the object of research, however, is like a gardener who selects the

⁵⁷ Ibidem, p. 17: 'Is het genoeg, dat men zich bepale bij de behoeften der beschaafde samenleving, dat men de taal zuiver en sierlijk leere spreken en schrijven, en wat in haar geschreven is, naauwkeurig verstaan. Kortom, dat hare beoefening gelijk zij aan die der uitheemsche nieuwere talen, aan welke wij zelden eene diepere studie wijden, dan vereischt wordt voor den gezelligen omgang, en om niet verstoken te blijven van het kunstgenot, ons in den vreemde aangeboden?' (emphasis added).

⁵⁸ Ibidem: 'Neen gewis, in zulk eene oppervlakkige kennis, zoo geheel tot het uiterlijke beperkt, kan de hulde niet bestaan, aan de moedertaal verschuldigd. Hoogere eischen heeft de taalkunde te vervullen' (emphasis added).

finest ornamental plants, cultivates them carefully, groups them in a graceful manner and unites them into a lovely whole.⁵⁹ [131]

As is commonly known, the opposition between the botanist and the gardener had previously been used by August Schleicher. In 1860, Schleicher wrote that the philologist ‘resembles the gardener. He cultivates only certain plants of outstanding importance for the human race. For him the practical value, the beauty of form, coloration, fragrance, *etcetera*, is of the utmost importance. Plants that are good for nothing are to him indifferent, partly hated as a weed’.⁶⁰ In contrast, the ‘Glottiker’, i.e. the linguist:

relates to the languages, as for example the botanist to his plants. The botanist must have an overview of all vegetable organisms, he must learn to know the laws of their structure; but the use he is to make of the plants, their practical and aesthetic value or worthlessness, is initially indifferent to him; the most beautiful roses, the most magnificent lilies of Japan concerns him equally as a random inconspicuous weed.⁶¹

With these remarks, Schleicher drew a distinction between philology and linguistics. ‘Philology is a historical discipline [...] Linguistics, however, is [...] a natural history discipline’.⁶² As Schleicher had argued as early as 1850, the object of linguistics is investigation of ‘language as such; [linguistics] forms part of the natural history of mankind’.⁶³ It is interesting to note that his French disciple Abel Hovelacque (1843-1896) in his *La linguistique* of 1876 [132] exactly translated Schleicher’s 1860

⁵⁹ De Vries, ‘Inleiding’, pp. lxxlx-lxxxi: ‘(heeft) de meest versletene en verminkte woordvorm niet minder waarde dan de schoonste en keurigste uitdrukking, gelijk voor den botanicus het nietigste onkruid even belangrijk is als de prachtigste bloem. Hij beoordeelt niet het gehalte der woorden en vormen die hij waarneemt; hij beschrijft ze eenvoudig, bepaalt hunne kenmerken, verklaart hunnen oorsprong en wijst de wetten aan die hun leven beheerschen’. De taalbeoefenaar die de schrijftaal tot object van onderzoek kiest, is echter als de hovenier, die de fraaiste sierplanten uitkiest, ze zorgvuldig kweekt, bevallig groepeeret en tot een liefelijk geheel vereenigt’.

⁶⁰ Cf. Schleicher, *Die deutsche Sprache*, p. 121: ‘... gleicht dem Gärtner. Dieser cultivirt nur bestimmten Pflanzen von hervorragender Bedeutung für den Menschen, für ihn ist der praktische Werth, die Schönheit der Form, der Färbung, des Duftes u.s.f. von höchster Bedeutung. Pflanzen, die zu nichts zu brauchen sind, sind ihm gleich-giltig, zum Theil als Unkraut verhasst’.

⁶¹ Cf. Schleicher, *ibidem*: ‘verhält sich zu den Sprachen wie z.B. der Botaniker zu den Pflanzen. Der Botaniker muss einen Ueberblick über alle pflanzlichen Organismen haben, er muss die Gesetze ihres Baues, kennen lernen; aber der Gebrauch der von den Gewächsen zu machen ist, ihr praktischer und ästhetischer Werth oder Unwerth ist ihm zunächst gleichgiltig; die schönsten Rosen, die prachtvollsten Lilien Japans gehen ihn nicht mehr oder weniger an als das erste beste unscheinbare Unkraut’. This type of comparison was not new. For example, see the statement by Karl Mager from 1844: ‘Verglichen mit dem Linguisten, Historiker u.s.w. ist der Philolog ungefähr, was der Blumist gegenüber dem Botaniker ist. Den Botaniker interessiert jedes Gewächs, weil es ein Gewächs ist, der Blumist, immer nicht mit dem gewöhnlichen Kuchengärtner zu verwechseln, der Alles Unkraut nennt, was man nicht essen kann, will nur das in seinem Garten sehen, was Aug’und Herz erfreut.’ Cf. also Mager, ‘Die moderne Philologie und die deutschen Schulen’, p. 8.

⁶² *Ibidem*, pp. 119-120: ‘Die Philologie ist eine historische Disciplin [...] Die Sprachwissenschaft dagegen ist [...] eine naturhistorische Disciplin’.

⁶³ Schleicher, *Die Sprachen Europas*, p.1: ‘die Linguistik hat die Sprache als solche zum Object [...], sie bildet einen Theil der Naturgeschichte des Menschen’.

statements when discussing ‘linguistics, the unique study of which is the exam of language itself and for itself’.⁶⁴

A well-known contemporary, the German-English linguist Max Müller (1823-1900) also considered linguistics a ‘physical science’. In his widely read *Lectures on the science of language* (1861-1863) Müller stated, ‘There are two great divisions of human knowledge, which, according to their subject-matter, may be called physical and historical. Physical science [...] deals with the works of God, historical science with the works of man’.⁶⁵ Note, however, that in this regard, there are major differences between the linguistic views of Schleicher and Müller, as with their views on Darwinist thought.

It is important to note another observation with regard to the statements of Matthias de Vries, who was a classical philologist by origin and inspired largely by Jacob Grimm in his work with historical linguistics. De Vries had done little independent work in the field of the philosophy of science. To my knowledge, the sharp oppositions formulated by August Schleicher and fiercely discussed in Germany in the late nineteenth century are not to be found in contemporary Dutch linguistics.⁶⁶ In general, however, Dutch scholarship had become aware of the autonomous position of linguistics, as is apparent in the remarks of H.E. Moltzer, a student of Matthias de Vries and an ardent admirer of Max Müller, who was one of the most popular linguists at the time, also in the Netherlands.

Max Müller and the Netherlands

In a retrospective on occasion of the death of Max Müller in 1900, Taco de Beer (1838-1923), the editor of numerous educational magazines, reflected on the debt that ‘we, teachers of language’ owe to him.

Through the *Lectures*, Dutch language teachers learned for the very first time that something as linguistics did exist, that the study of language is as exact as that of mathematics, that these people, who conjecture or [133] guess the derivation of words (à la Terwen)⁶⁷ are simply telling nonsense, but that there are almost immutable laws that rule the formation of words. [...] Through him, we learned to pay attention to language phenomena and to account of what appeared to us as strange or unnatural.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Hovelacque, *La linguistique*, p. 7: ‘la linguistique, dont l’unique étude est l’examen de la langue en elle-même et pour elle-même’. A discussion of the views of August Schleicher and his French and Belgian followers can be found in Desmet’s extensive study on ‘la linguistique naturaliste’ (1996).

⁶⁵ Müller, *Lectures on the science of language*, vol. 1, p. 23.

⁶⁶ Cf. Koerner, ‘Linguistics vs philology’, p. 171.

⁶⁷ J.L. Terwen (1813-1873) was the author of the rather unreliable *Etymologisch Handwoordenboek der Nederduitsche taal, of Proeve van een geregeld overzicht van de afstamming der Nederduitsche woorden* (‘Concise etymological dictionary of the Dutch language, or specimen of a systematic overview of the origin of the Dutch words’, 1864).

⁶⁸ De Beer, ‘Max Müller’, p. 100: ‘Door de *Lectures* leerden de Nederlandsche taalonderwijzers voor ’t eerst, dat er een taalwetenschap bestond, dat de studie der taal even exact is als die der wiskunde, dat zij, die à la Terwen de afleiding der woorden raden of gissen, eenvoudig onzin vertellen maar dat er bijna onveranderlijke wetten zijn, die de vervorming der woorden beheerschen (...) Door hem leerden wij op taalverschijnselen schap vragen van wat ons vreemd of onnatuurlijk scheen’. In the Dutch periodical *De Taalgids*, Müller’s views were advanced

De Beer proceeds to argue that if individuals within the modest circle of Dutch language teachers of that time believed in linguistics and were convinced ‘that the teaching method and the basis of argumentation is identical to the much-maligned knowledge of language and the highly praised mathematical and natural sciences, then it is Max Müller to whom we owe everything, the man who, by official linguistic scholarship, was judged with contemptuous benevolence, but who granted the unlearned a glimpse of the treasures of scholarship’.⁶⁹

Moltzer’s 1872 characterization of Max Müller as ‘a respected, honoured, celebrated and admired author’ in the Netherlands, whose every contribution and essay ‘is devoured by the professionals’, is not an exaggeration.⁷⁰ Within the circles of professional Dutch linguists, Müller’s *Lectures on the science of language* were studied with great interest as well. I shall give one example. The year 1868 saw the publication of a treatise that has remained relatively obscure to linguistic scholarship at large: *Over de classificatie der talen* (‘On the classification of languages’). The treatise was written by Johannes Brill (1842-1924), a classical scholar from Utrecht and a son [134] of Willem Gerard Brill (1811-1896). The elder Brill was Professor of Dutch Language in Utrecht and more conservative in matters linguistics. It is not difficult to identify the principal guide for the younger Brill in this regard: Max Müller.

In his treatise, Brill presents a brief overview of the development of the ‘modern science of language’, focusing on ‘the classification it proposes of the languages spoken all over the face of the earth’.⁷¹ Having characterized the Oxford professor as one of the most brilliant contemporary language researchers, Brill quotes Müller’s celebrated formulation about the true object of the science of language. In addition to Greek, Latin and other classical languages, Müller proposed that the science of language should focus on ‘dialects that have never produced any literature at all, the jargons of savage tribes, the clicks of the Hottentots and the vocal modulations of the Indo-Chinese’.⁷² Brill eventually left the Netherlands for South Africa, where he successfully applied the insights of the ‘new science of language’ to the regional vernacular, the ‘landstaal’.⁷³ In doing so, he played an important role with regard to the development and codification of what later became known as Afrikaans.⁷⁴

De nieuwe richting in de taalkunde (‘The new trend in linguistics’) is the provocative title of the inaugural lecture delivered by Henri E. Moltzer (1836-1895) in Groningen in 1865. Moltzer had studied with Matthias de Vries in Leiden. His inaugural lecture is characterized by a strong

in the years 1865-1867, under the title ‘Max Müllers lectures over taalkunde’. A.M. Kollewijn Nz (1827-1900) published a number of extracts from the *Lectures*, as the work was not available in a Dutch translation and probably too expensive for student teachers and assistant teachers.

⁶⁹ De Beer, ‘Max Müller’, p. 100: ‘dat de leermethode en de grond van betoogen de zelfde is voor de diep gesmade taalkennis en de hooggeprezen wis- en natuurkundige wetenschappen, dan is het aan Max Muller, dat we dat alles te danken hebben, aan den man, die door de geleerden met minachtende welwillendheid werd beoordeeld, maar die aan de ongeleerden vergunde een kijkje te krijgen in de schatkamers der wetenschap’.

⁷⁰ Moltzer, ‘Inleidend woord’, p. 3: ‘een geacht, geëerd, gevierd en bewonderd schrijver’, whose work ‘wordt verslonden door de mannen van het vak’.

⁷¹ Brill, *Over de classificatie der talen*, p. 6: ‘de door haar voorgestelde classificatie der over den geheelen aardbodem gebezigde talen’.

⁷² Ibidem, p. 17; cf. Müller, *Lectures on the science of language*, p. 25.

⁷³ Ibidem, p. 6.

⁷⁴ Noordegraaf, ‘De bril van de taalkundige’, pp. 60-62.

methodological awareness. As has been pointed out, the works of De Vries were influenced by his reading Schleicher. Moltzer's works now contain traces of his intensive study of Müller's *Lectures*. According to Moltzer, the difference between the old school and the new school was as extensive 'as that between the system of Ptolemaeus and that of Copernicus'.⁷⁵ Moltzer described the principle of the old school as 'the principle of servitude', given that 'until a lifetime ago, the study of language was hardly anything other than a servant of philology'.⁷⁶ Moltzer turns against a priori and deductive methods in matters linguistic. According to him, it would never be possible [135] to achieve reliable results as long as 'the system was preferred to an accurate knowledge of facts and speculation was preferred to experience', and as long as scholars did not aspire to climb 'from the phenomena to the laws to which they are subjected'.⁷⁷

'The acquisition of a profound knowledge of language requires much more than some abstract idea or arbitrary rule. It involves observation, complete and perfect, precise and definite; moreover, [it involves the] observation of a tremendously large number of phenomena'.⁷⁸ Moltzer then concludes: 'In this way, linguistics borrows its method from the natural sciences, and it reckons to know nothing unless it can be proven empirically'.⁷⁹ In the terms of Newton, Moltzer is referring to *hypotheses non fingo*.

The focus of the new school was thus as follows: 'not solely the grammar that limits itself to the present, but also the development of language, its genesis, its origin and its relationship; in one word, language, in its full extent'.⁸⁰ In my view, several of these verdicts are largely programmatic and rhetorical in character, serving to specify the new discipline that must be taught. Whether Moltzer followed these guidelines in his own research is a different question.

Having arrived at the end of the scholarly part of his inaugural lecture, Moltzer refers to the continued existence of a discussion concerning the question whether 'the youthful science should be incorporated into the natural sciences or into the historical sciences'.⁸¹ It is important to note, however, that Max Müller is completely clear on this point: philology belongs to the 'historical' sciences, while the 'science of language' demands 'a place among the physical sciences', as August Schleicher had also argued for the 'Glottik'.⁸² [136]

The influence of Max Müller on Moltzer is also clearly discernible in Moltzer's very first paper on the origin of language (1865), composed several years after the publication of Darwin's

⁷⁵ Moltzer, *Nieuwe richting in de taalkunde*, p. 41: als dat tusschen het systeem van Ptolemaeus en dat van Copernicus'.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, p. 11: 'het beginsel der dienstbaarheid', 'tot voor een menschenleeftijd was de taal weinig meer dan dienaar van der philologie'.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, p. 18: boven nauwkeurige feitenkennis het stelsel, boven de ervaring de bespiegeling gold', 'zolang men niet wilde opklimmen 'van de verschijnselen tot de wetten waaraan zij zijn onderworpen'.

⁷⁸ Ibidem, p. 26: 'Om tot kennis, tot grondige kennis der taal te komen, wordt iets meer vereischt dan eenen ander afgetrokken denkbeeld of willekeurig voorschrift. Er behoort eene waarneming toe, zoo volledig en zuiver, zoo naauwkeurig en bepaald, eene waarneming bovendien van een zoo ontzettend groot aantal verschijnselen'.

⁷⁹ Ibidem, p. 27: 'Zoo neemt de taalkunde van de natuurwetenschappen hare methode over, en acht niets te weten tenzij het proefondervindelijk te bewijzen is'.

⁸⁰ Ibidem, p. 24: 'niet de spraakkunst alleen, die zich bepaalt bij het tegenwoordige, maar ook de ontwikkeling der taal, hare wording, haar oorsprong, hare verwantschap, in één woord de taal in haren ganschen omvang'.

⁸¹ Ibidem, p.54: 'of de jeugdige wetenschap behoort te worden ingelijfd bij de natuurwetenschappen of bij de historische'.

⁸² Müller, *Lectures on the science of language*, vol. 1, pp. 24, 30.

On the origin of species (1859). In this work, Moltzer states that Max Müller was perfectly right: language and reason are the features by which humanity is distinguished from brutes. He argued that humans speak because they think, just as they think because they speak. ‘The word is the thought incarnate’, he quotes from Müller.⁸³ In his later work, however, Moltzer changed his position completely. Not long after the publication of *The Descent of Man* (1871), he concluded that linguistic science supported Darwin’s hypothesis concerning the evolution of humans.⁸⁴

1865: Henri Kern, Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Linguistics

In the early 1860s, Matthias de Vries and his Leiden colleague, the Hebraist Abraham Rutgers (1751-1878), who had also taught Sanskrit for a number of years, had conceived the idea that a separate chair should be established for the study of Sanskrit and comparative linguistics and that their brilliant former student Henri Kern (1833-1917) was the most qualified candidate for the job. Kern’s appointment did not run smoothly at all, however, as the Dutch government did not fancy the idea of such a chair, which was then still considered a sort of luxury. In 1865, however, the Netherlands became one of the last European countries to obtain a Professor of Sanskrit.

Johan Hendrik Caspar Kern of Leiden (generally referred to simply as ‘H. Kern’) was a truly professional linguist, often characterized as the *mahaguru* (‘great master’). He had studied in Berlin and in London, and he had worked in India, thereby building an extensive network. In Leiden, he also taught courses on the comparative grammar of Indo-Germanic languages. The year in which this Leiden scholar was appointed could be considered a milestone on the path to the professionalization of historical comparative linguistics in the Netherlands. Some ten years later, in 1876, a New Act on Higher Education became effective. As I pointed out before, one consequence of this legislation was the official inclusion of such items as [137] the principles of comparative Indo-European linguistics in the curriculum for the study of Dutch.⁸⁵

Kern is a fascinating figure, for various reasons. Within the framework of this volume, however, I would like to focus on his paper on ‘Philology and language comparison’, which he presented at the first *Nederlandsch Philologencongres* (‘Dutch philology conference’), which was held in Amsterdam in 1898. The field of linguistics was well represented at this conference as well. In his paper, Kern sought only to advance ‘his personal views on the relationship between comparative language study and philology in general’.⁸⁶ Among other arguments in the paper, the Leiden scholar criticized these classical scholars, who maintained due distance from comparative linguistics, despite the fact that comparative linguistics was ‘the worthy daughter of classical philology’, given that ‘the first practitioners of note had had a thorough classical training’.⁸⁷

⁸³ Moltzer, *Nieuwe richting in de taalkunde*, p. 12.

⁸⁴ Bart Leeuwenburgh’s 2009 study *Darwin in domineesland* (‘Darwin in the provinces’) addresses the reception of Darwin’s ideas among Dutch contemporary linguists in a slightly selective manner.

⁸⁵ Van Essen, *Kruisinga. A chapter in the history of linguistics in the Netherlands*, p. 38.

⁸⁶ Kern, ‘Philologie en taalvergelijking’, p. 50: ‘zijn persoonlijke meeningen [...] over het verband tusschen de vergelijkende taalstudie en de philologie in ’t algemeen’.

⁸⁷ Ibidem, p. 52-53: ‘de waardige dochter van de klassieke philologie’, de eerste beoefenaars van beteekenis hadden een grondige klassieke opleiding genoten’.

In a concise historical overview, Kern portrayed comparative linguistics as a relatively young discipline, having been ‘born and matured only in this century’.⁸⁸ He also referred to the catalytic effect of the study of Sanskrit and the enormous influence that emanated from it to the study of the Germanic languages. With regard to philology, Kern remarked that

A philologist should first have a thorough acquaintance with the language, both grammatically and lexically, and he should understand the social conditions and the range of thought of the people and its authors. (...) For all of this, much time is needed, and therefore only very few have stood out both as practitioners of comparative linguistics and as philologists; but the many scholars who gained reputations as Germanists, Romanists, Slavists or Indologists, were fairly well versed in philology. The comparativists do know that they cannot do without philology, and the philologists in various areas are similarly aware of the fact that they may gain profit from the results of linguistics.⁸⁹ [138]

To the philologist, language is not the goal, as it is to the linguist; instead, it is a means of becoming acquainted with humanity and with the spirit of a people.⁹⁰ The two disciplines may nonetheless actually complement each other rather than being in opposition to each other.

Kern argued that there was a distinction between linguistics and philology, in which the study of language was not the obedient servant of philology,⁹¹ but was practised for its own sake. In his paper, Kern does not address any methodological differences between the two disciplines and, to the best of my knowledge, he never elaborated this issue in writing. This could also be because of the emerging awareness in German linguistics that ‘no one had been able to draw a conceptual boundary between linguistics and philology, whose untenability could not easily be proved’.⁹² The distinction between linguistics and philology might be explained ‘from the development which scientific research has taken’, as stated by the German scholar Karl Brugmann (1849-1919) in his *Antrittsvorlesung* (inaugural lecture) on ‘Sprachwissenschaft und Philologie’ (1885).⁹³

In other words, this distinction had apparently once been important in connection to the development of linguistics, probably in order to emphasize the unique character of linguistics, but now it had become more and more important to aim for cooperation, said Brugmann in 1885, and Kern in 1898. I would like to stress, however, that linguistics had become an autonomous discipline

⁸⁸ Ibidem, p. 51: ‘pas in deze eeuw geboren en opgegroeid’.

⁸⁹ Ibidem, pp. 52-53: ‘Voor dit alles is veel tijd nodig, en daarom hebben maar uiterst weinigen uitgeblonken als beoefenaars van de vergelijkende taalwetenschap en tevens al philologen; maar de velen die zich als Germanist, Romanist, Slavist of Indoloog naam hebben verworven, waren behoorlijk philologisch onderlegd. De taalvergelijkers weten dat zij het zonder philologie niet kunnen stellen, en wederkeerig beseffen de philologen op allerlei gebied dat zij van de uitkomsten der linguistiek partij kunnen trekken’.

⁹⁰ Ibidem, p. 55.

⁹¹ Cf. Moltzer, *Nieuwe richting in de taalkunde*, p. 11.

⁹² Brugmann, ‘Sprachwissenschaft und Philologie’, p. 17: ‘noch niemand [sic] eine begriffliche Grenze zwischen Linguistik und Philologie zu ziehen gewusst [hat], deren Unhaltbarkeit sich nicht leicht darthun liesse’.

⁹³ Ibidem: ‘aus dem Entwicklungsgange, den die wissenschaftliche Forschung genommen hat’.

in the meantime, and that it was no longer required to defend itself against the usurpation of neighbouring fields of research.⁹⁴

To avoid the reproach that my argument is based upon a one-sided focus on the Indo-European languages, I should like to note another side of Kern's activities. As noted by his former student Christianus Cornelis [139] Uhlenbeck (1866-1951) in 1918, Kern was acquainted with too many other languages not to have seen 'the vanity of a theory that was founded on merely one language family'. Twenty years later (in 1938), he referred back to the effects of this opinion on Kern's courses: "'Old Kern" first taught us here in the Netherlands that the discipline of Indo-Germanic studies can benefit enormously from the study of non-Indo-Germanic languages'.⁹⁵ For example, Kern had paid considerable attention to such 'exotic' languages as Old Javanese and Fiji. In doing so, he had also shown himself to be critical of 'the theories that announced themselves as a new gospel around 1880: the doctrine of the *Junggrammatiker*'. When a young student of Dutch language, Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) experienced this gospel personally: the Ph.D. dissertation on linguistics, which he wrote in Groningen, was rejected because it did not fit within the neo-grammarians paradigm. Subsequently, Huizinga turned definitively to cultural history and, as is well known, he became a distinguished historian.

The methodological requirement to consider non-Indo-European languages as well appears to have been a crucial factor with regard to the direction that Uhlenbeck would take later in his own research as a professor in Leiden. When one of his students, Coenraad Bernardus van Haeringen (1892-1983), wished to confine himself exclusively to Indo-Germanic language data, Uhlenbeck snorted, '*Binnenschipperij!*'.⁹⁶ When discussing comparative linguistics in the nineteenth century, this 'exotic' dimension of nineteenth-century linguistics should be given explicit consideration.⁹⁷

1898: A classical philologist looks back

At the first Dutch Philologencongres, which took place in 1898, linguistics had obtained a place of its own. It had eventually become a professionalized discipline. In his opening speech, the conference chair, the distinguished classical scholar Samuel Adrianus Naber (1828-1913), who was a former student of Cobet, looked back upon a number of aspects, including the relationship between philology and historical-comparative linguistics in [140] the century that lay behind him. In Naber's view, the *homines comparativi* were researchers who were only interested in language

⁹⁴ The distinguished German classical scholar Georg Curtius (1820-1885) had stressed as early as 1845 that 'die historische Sprachvergleichung weder in einem innern Gegensatze der Richtung steht, noch in der Art der Forschung wesentlich von ihr abweicht, dass also der Unterscheid nur in der Ausdehnung besteht'. In his 'Antrittsvorlesung' of 1862 on 'Philologie und Sprachwissenschaft', he subjected the relationship between the two disciplines to closer inspection, clearly steering towards reconciliation. Cf. Curtius, *Die Sprachvergleichung*, p. 45.

⁹⁵ Hinrichs, *Nicolaas van Wijk*, p. 212.

⁹⁶ Literally, 'sailing in inland waters'.

⁹⁷ Cf. Noordegraaf, 'C.C. Uhlenbeck and the Humboldtian tradition in linguistics'. This tradition, generally associated with the name of Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), was characterized by an interest in the general nature of language and a concern for 'primitive' languages, along with the typological classification of languages. This ethno-linguistic research programme was radically different from the historical-comparative research.

for its own sake. For these scholars, literature served purely as an auxiliary means of becoming acquainted with the development of the language.

The classical scholar from Amsterdam argued: 'Linguistics is a young discipline; it was born only when the continent of Europe became acquainted with Sanskrit, so less than a hundred years ago'. According to Naber, the achievements from the early years of this young science did not rise above the level of mere dilettantism. 'It was only half a century ago that linguistics gradually learned to obey strict laws'. Now there was no longer cause for caution with regard to its results. 'We have great expectations of the labour of our linguists', concluded Naber, reflecting optimistically on the future achievements of the linguistic section of the Philologencongres.⁹⁸ A controversial atmosphere was then apparently out of the question, now that linguistics had gained an indisputable place within the conference of Dutch philologists.

Final remarks

In 1827, Franz Bopp, one of the founding fathers of historical-comparative linguistics, noted that grammar had 'no independent and purely scientific value, if it merely paves the way to a perfect insight into the meaning of the writers, who have written in the discussed language'.⁹⁹ Discussing the foundations of a truly scientific study of language, Bopp pointed to a *bon mot* in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*: 'To master a subject totally, it is necessary to study it for its own sake'.¹⁰⁰

As we have already seen, in an *esprit boppien*,¹⁰¹ August Schleicher had argued that the object of linguistics is the investigation of 'die Sprache als [141] solche', and his French follower Abel Hovelacque had rendered Schleicher's statements into French when writing in 1876 about 'linguistics, the unique study of which is the exam of language itself and for itself'.¹⁰² It is this very phrase that was added by the editors of Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857-1913) *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916) as its final sentence: 'linguistics has as its one true object of study the language contemplated in itself and for itself'.¹⁰³ In the twentieth century, this pseudo-saussurean statement was to be considered as a guiding principle of the 'structuralist' conception of language.

98 Naber, *Handelingen Eerste Nederlandsche Philologen-Congres*, p. 21: 'Wij hebben groote verwachting van den arbeid onzer linguïsten'.

99 Bopp, *Vocalismus oder sprachvergleichende Kritiken*, p. 3: 'keinen selbständigen und rein Wissenschaftlichen Wert, wenn sie sich blos zur Aufgabe macht, den Weg zu bahnen zu einer vollkommenen Einsicht in den Sinn der Schriftsteller, die in der behandelten Sprache geschrieben haben'.

¹⁰⁰ Ibidem, p. 3: 'Um einen Gegenstand ganz zu besitzen, zu beherrschen, muß man ihn um sein selbst willen studieren'. In his *Ueber Leben, Geschichte und Sprache* (1835), the German lexicographer Lorenz Diefenbach (1806-1883), a correspondent of Matthias de Vries', endorsed Bopp's point of view: 'wir rufen ihm [sc. the philologist] mit Bopp Göthe's Worte zu: 'Was nützt, ist nur ein Theil des Bedeutenden. Um einen Gegenstand ganz zu besitzen, zu beherrschen, muß man ihn um sein selbst willen studieren' (p. 29).

¹⁰¹ Klippi, *La vie du language*, p. 106.

¹⁰² See (n. 64). See also Klippi, *La vie du language*, p. 106.

¹⁰³ De Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, p. 317: 'la linguistique a pour unique et véritable objet la langue envisagée en elle-même et pour elle-même'.

As it appears, the rapid development and expansion of linguistics in the nineteenth century was a complex process, in the Netherlands as well as in the rest of Europe. Much has been written on this theme. In this contribution, I have just followed the line of the dominant trend: historical-comparative linguistics. In the words of a Dutch poet, I have sought to catch the sea in a fishing net by outlining the process of autonomization in this trend of linguistic research in our country in a few successive steps: from the Newtonian framework of the eighteenth century to the crucial period of the 1850s and 1860s, by way of a somewhat hybrid ‘under-construction phase’ lasting approximately half a century.

This paper has provided no explicit discussion of either the role model of the natural sciences in the nineteenth century or the important position of such learned panels as the Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Leiden Society of Dutch Language and Letters and the various conferences. These forums should nonetheless be included in any broad and coherent overview of the activities concerning the study of language in nineteenth-century the Netherlands.

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